

E 664
.E7 Z7
Copy 1





Class E 664

Book E 7 Z 7

PAID
JAN 21 1908

In Memoriam.

Hon. Daniel Cmentrout.

E604
.E7Z1

P
Author
(Person)

75473

In Memoriam.

HISTORICAL SKETCH

DELIVERED BEFORE THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF BERKS COUNTY, PA.,

NOVEMBER, 14, 1899,

By THOS. C. ZIMMERMAN.

On Sunday, September 17th, 1899, at 6 o'clock in the morning, Daniel Ermentrout, the subject of this sketch, passed peacefully away after an illness of only a few days. The immediate cause of his death, which was accidental, was due to an inflammatory irritation, superinduced by the lodgment of some foreign substance—a piece of unmasticated food—in the œsophagus.

The family to which Mr. Ermentrout belonged was one of the most influential and widely-known in the county of Berks—a family that has contributed in no small degree to the making of our local history. Its members have occupied with distinction leading places in all the learned professions and skilled avocations.

The father of Daniel Ermentrout, whose name was William Ermentrout, was born in Womelsdorf in 1799. He had 10 children—John Silvis Ermentrout, William C., Benjamin F., Daniel, Philip M., Joseph C., Samuel C., James Nevin, Ellen, widow of H. C. Ritter, and Elizabeth, wife of Benneville Ber-tolet.

As will be seen, in a genealogical narrative which follows, the family line can be traced back in Germany, for the most part unbroken, to about 1350, when the family name was Eh-

rentraudt. This information was furnished by Rudolph, Baron von Irmtraut in 1896, and has been in the possession of the family of Daniel Ermentrout ever since that time. Following is the history of the lineage referred to:

The family of the Barons von Irmtraut belonged to the very oldest members of the German nobility and formed part of the old tournament circle of Franconia. The spelling of the name occurs in many different ways, explained by the circumstance that in those remote days very few of the knightly nobles were able to write more than their names, and even then they were spelled by the same man in different ways. They generally signed their documents only by the imprint of their signet rings or the pommel of their swords, with their coat of arms. In old genealogical works and in documents referring to the family it is found to be spelled Ehrendraud, Ehrentraud, Ermentraut, Ermtraut, Irmentraut and Irmtraut. Today the name is Irmtraut in Austria and Ermentrout in America. The family originated as far as known in the county of Hadamar in the Grand Dukedom of Nassau, where still exists the village of Irmtraut. The feudal seat and manor-house (castle) was there, and probably

according to the prevailing usage the family gave their name to the place.

At present there is no vestige of them to be found there, except a great old barn built of stone with the coat of arms carved thereon in the stone, but the castle has disappeared. I wrote to the minister of the place in 1864 to inquire if there were still traces of our old home to be found and got the above result.

The village at present is a flourishing little place of 1500 inhabitants, situated on the outskirts of the "Westerwald." Besides farming, their principal industry consists of wood-carving and fancy basket-making, which are peddled—generally by girls in their very picturesque costumes—over the whole of Southern Germany. Several of these girls, having been told by their minister of my existence, then in Baden, called expressly on me for the purpose of seeing a scion of their former lords. They told me that it had made quite a stir in the village when they heard that a member of the family was living.

* * *

It is not known how long the family dwelt there, but it seems probable that

they remained until the end of the 17th century, as nearly all the inter-marriages up to that time are with families living in that neighborhood—Nassau, Palatinate, Franconia, etc.—and even the marriage of Wilhelmina von Irntraut, the last of this line, to Gerhard von Werkamp, whose family belonged to the Palatinate, (1695-1758) seems to prove this theory.

That the family belonged even in remote times to "good old stock," as proven by the participation of several of their members in the tournaments of the nobility. In a tournament held at Frankfurth, and at the celebrated tournament at Nuremberg in 1433—time of the Emperor Sigismund—sons of the family participated, belonging to the "tournament ring of Franconia." Since the Emperor Henry VI. four tournament rings were known in Germany, viz., Rheinland, Franken, Bayern and Schwaben.

To be eligible to these tournaments the Knight had to prove his "quarterings," viz., his direct descent from four noble families (also all eligible) on both sides—from the father's and mother's sides. Then only could he enter the ring. The proof was this:

GRANDFATHER.	GRANDMOTHER.	GRANDFATHER.	GRANDMOTHER
1352-Gilbrecht von Irntraut.	Anna von Selbach	1429-Arnold von Kettig.	Elga Walpott von Ulm

1419-Gottbrecht von Ermtraut
(father)

Agnes von Kettig
(mother)

Wilhelm von Ermtraut, 1445.
married to

Ursula Bredter von Hohenstein.

Ursula Bredter von Hohenstein was the daughter of Jacob, 1485, and of Anna von Schenk von Geyern. — Jacob was the Son of Henn, 1467, and of Gretta von der Erlen, Son of Henn, 1434-1450, and of Lysa Mohr von Walde, Son of Henn, 1425, and of Elizabeth Setzer von Geisspitzheim, And so it goes on—every marriage being with the nobility.

Several members of the family seem to have been of an adventurous disposition, as we find in the records two of them mentioned as having participated in the Spanish-Moorish wars, and as being killed by the Moors in Spain.

* * *

In early times the family were doubtless of the Catholic faith. Many of the wives' families certainly were, and several members were Abbots in "noble, knightly Abbeys." The time of their change to Protestantism is not exactly known, but was probably at the time of the Reformation. The living members of our line today are Protestants.

* * *

All the families who intermarried with the Ermtrauts, beginning with Godebrecht in 1339, were "noble, knightly." Almost all of them lived in the same or neighboring counties—Franconia, Suabia and Palatinate. Many of these families are at this date flourishing as some of the best known in Germany—as the Counts of Bassenheim in Bavaria; the Princes and Counts of Metternich in Austria and on the Rhine; the Counts of Schwarzenberg in Austria; the Hatzfelds in Prussia; the Schoenborns-Austria, the Barons von Stein on the Rhine and in Prussia, etc.

* * *

The Irmtrauts were all conspicuous in the military service—while on the female side of the house the men served their country in civil offices. One of their number was sent on a diplomatic mission to Duke Charles of Burgundy, 16th century, and after concluding a favorable treaty was rewarded by his sovereign by the augmentation of his coat of arms. This ambassador was possibly the father or grandfather of Gerhard von Werkamp, who married Wilhelmina Frederika Sophie Baroness von Irmtraut, who was the last of her line remaining in the Old World. But to this day the family retain the name of Irmtraut by special diploma of the Emperor granted June 6th, 1792.

This Baroness being the last surviving member of her family and married to Baron von Werkamp, Alt-Burckhausen was at that time (June 6, 1792) given "the right for all time to come, to assume for her own person and for all of her descendants to come, born in rightful wedlock, male and female, the name, title, coat of arms and all other prerogatives of the ancient and noble family of Barons von Irmtraut, as if they had been born in that ilk; and they must therefore, now and in all future, by His Imperial Majesty's order, use henceforth on all occasions and be known by the name Barons von and of Irmtraut, Barons of the Holy Empire, and use rightfully their coat of arms and join it to that of Barons Werkamp-Alt-Burckhausen."

* * *

This was all in consideration of the distinguished services this ancient and well-known family had rendered the state, and because the Government desired that the name, coat of arms and traditions of so ancient a member of the nobility of the Empire should continue to live and be perpetuated in the annals of the country."

Today the head of this house is living in retirement near Vienna at an advanced age—over eighty—having served his Emperor and country as General of the Austrian army.

Baron Rudolph von Irmtraut, who furnished the above information, is between seventy and eighty. One year ago, through the late Daniel Ermentrout, he presented to the Pennsylvania German Society the coat of arms of the Palatinate exquisitely painted by himself.

The home of the first emigrant to this country, John Ermentrout, the great-grandfather of the subject of this sketch, was in the Palatinate, whence he came to the New World in 1739, and established his home in what was afterwards erected into Berks county.

Christopher Ermentrout, the next in line of descent, was born in Berks county, where he was engaged in agri-

cultural pursuits all his life; his birth occurred February 8, 1754.

The grandfather of our subject, John E., son of Christopher, was born in Berks county, April 27, 1777, and farmed and carried on the manufacture of hats in the vicinity of Womelsdorf, living the last twenty years of his life in comfortable retirement. That he possessed endurance beyond the best is evidenced by the fact that he often walked to Philadelphia on business, covering the distance between sunrise and sunset. In his political views he was a Democrat of the Thomas Jefferson school.

William E., his son, was born in Womelsdorf, Berks county, December 12, 1799, and lived to be over 80 years of age, dying January 21, 1880. He entered upon his active career as a merchant in Womelsdorf, where he was engaged in business until his removal to Reading in 1829, in which city he continued to busy himself in mercantile pursuits.

He served as Treasurer of Berks county from 1851 to 1853; for many years was a member of the Board of Control of the public schools of Reading, holding for a time the position of Treasurer of the Board. He was an active and consistent member of the First Reformed Church of Reading, holding the office of deacon for many years.

* * *

Daniel Ermentrout, the fourth son of William, in whom the interest of this biographical notice centres, was born in Reading January 24, 1837, and received in his youth a thorough training in the public and classical schools of his native city. It was in the classical school taught by Mr. Kelly, of Irish parentage born in France, where Mr. Ermentrout learned to love the languages and acquired great proficiency in French. He also attended Franklin and Marshall College at Lancaster, Pa., and Ellwood Institute of Norristown, Pa. Before leaving the Institute he taught school for a number of years in Reading, Conshohocken,

Norristown, and Muhlenberg township, at the same time pursuing his legal studies under the direction and tutelage of Judge David F. Gordon, being admitted to the bar on August 3, 1859. He rose rapidly in his profession, and from almost the first he enjoyed a lucrative and extensive practice.

* * *

Politics ever had a decided attraction for him, and from his first entrance into public life as district attorney of the county in 1862, serving a term of three years, he was recognized as one of the leaders of the Democratic party in this county. From 1867 to 1870 he filled out three terms as city solicitor, and in 1873 was chosen to represent this district in the State Senate for a term of three years, his term of service having been lengthened in 1876 to seven years by a re-election to the same office for four years. In 1877 he was appointed as a member of the Pennsylvania Statuary Commission, which had been authorized by the State Legislature to select two prominent Pennsylvanians to be represented with statues in the Statuary Hall of the National Capitol. In 1880 Mr. Ermentrout was elected to Congress, and served continuously from 1881 to 1887, and again was sent to represent this district by the election of 1896, and was re-elected in 1898. He figured in every State Democratic Convention, and attended as a delegate to the National Democratic Convention of 1880, supporting at that time the name of Samuel J. Tilden as long as that gentleman was a candidate.

* * *

Mr. Ermentrout on February 1, 1870, married Adelaide Louise Metzger, daughter of John Metzger, Esq., of Lancaster, Pa., a woman of high attainments and many accomplishments. They had two children, Fitz-Daniel, an attorney of the Berks county bar, and a daughter, Adelaide Louise.

Mr. Ermentrout was well versed in the law, proficient in linguistic attainments, a skillful attorney, well read, a deep thinker, and a versatile writer.

He was one of the founders of the Historical Society of Berks county, a member of the Pennsylvania German Society, and of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Royal Arcanum, Americus Club, and an associate member of the Reading Press Club. For upwards of twenty years he had been a member of the board of trustees of the Charles Evans Cemetery Company. It was at a dinner of the Reading Press Club, only a few days before his death, where he made the last speech of his life, and where he appeared for the last time at any public function.

* * *

During his long Congressional career many of his bills for the benefit of his county were successfully put through both branches, and stand as memorials of his loyalty to home and friends.

In the 47th Congress, in 1882, he presented bills to change the name and location of the Kutztown National Bank, to furnish condemned cannon to McLean Post, No. 16, G. A. R., and to erect a Public Building at Reading, which was secured and stands today as his best monument. Incidentally, it may be mentioned here that Mr. Ermentrout was a member of Company G, 2d Regiment Penna. Militia, in 1862.

He also presented petitions and papers from the citizens of Pennsylvania for the passage of a bill to establish a Superior Court, for an appropriation to American steamships for ocean mail service, and for medals for the Ringgold Battery, First Defenders, in recognition of their services in 1861-1865.

He also made strong addresses in favor of the restriction of Chinese immigration, to extend the charters of the National bank, and against the appointment of a tariff commission.

In the 48th Congress he introduced a number of private pension claims which were afterwards secured. He offered petitions and papers to increase the pay of the Capitol police, and from citizens of Pennsylvania for the enforcement of the eight-hour law; for penny postage; from the Berks County Medical

Society for a building for a medical museum.

In the 50th Congress Mr. Ermentrout was appointed on the committee on inaugural ceremonies of President Harrison, and a teller at the count of the electoral vote.

He introduced bills to print the proceedings of Congress in accepting the statues of Cass, Muhlenberg and Fulton for Statuary Hall in the National Capitol. These motions and resolutions he offered: To admit ladies on the floor of the House; to reserve portions of the House gallery; for the appointment of a committee on inaugural ceremonies; presenting the thanks of Congress for the statues of Muhlenberg and Fulton. He also presented petitions and papers from the Reading Druggists' Association for free alcohol, and from the Reading Typographical Union, No. 86, for the Chance-Breckinridge currency bill. He made a splendid address on the Muhlenberg and Fulton statues.

* * *

In the 55th Congress he presented a bill and joint resolutions donating cannon to the G. A. R. at Allentown; for the relief of Herman Van Marsdorf; also papers and petitions from the Reading Cigarmakers' Union against increase in the tariff on tobacco; from Freedom Circle, Reading, relative to alien ownership of land; Penn Hardware Company of Reading, against duty on emery ore; Reading Tinplate Company, relative to placing tariff on tinplate; St. Lawrence Congregation, against placing church goods on the free list. He was also instrumental in securing the appointment of Hon. Henry May Keim as Consul to Prince Edwards Island; the appointment of Frank D. Keller, son of Col. D. C. Keller, in the regular army; securing a pension for the family of the late Lieut. John C. Hintz, U. S. V., and also securing flowers and plants for the beautifying of the public park at the head of Penn street. He made a memorable address at the Centennial in Philadel-

phia in 1876 on "The Pennsylvania Germans in History."

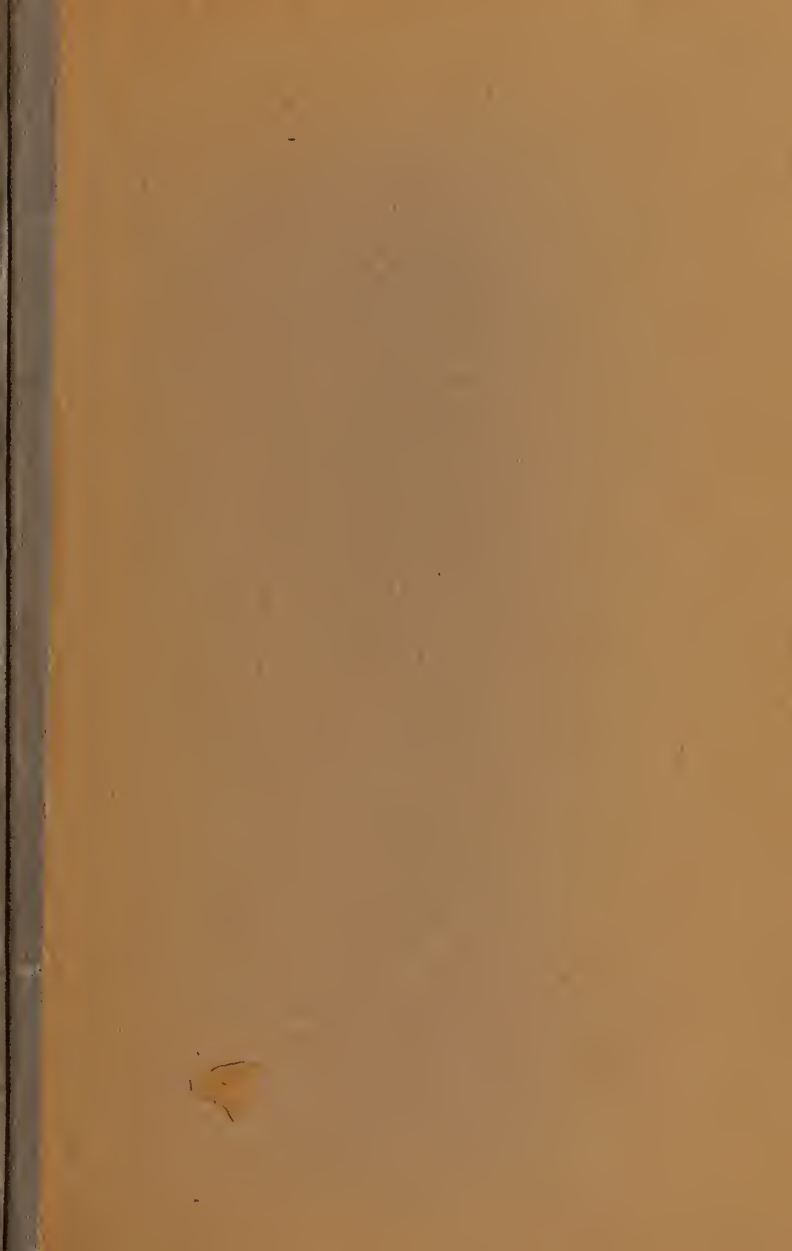
The remains of the deceased were interred at the Charles Evans Cemetery, in Reading, Pa., on the 21st of September, and were buried with Congressional honors. The funeral committee selected by the Clerk of the House consisted of the following gentlemen: Congressmen—A. C. Harmer, H. H. Bingham, Wm. McAleer, Philadelphia, Pa.; J. W. Ryan, Pottsville, Pa.; Galusha A. Grow, Glenwood, Pa.; Wm. Alden Smith, Mich.; C. F. Joy, Mo.; W. P. Hepburn, Iowa; J. S. Salmon, Boonton, N. J.; W. D. Daly, Hoboken, N. J.; J. J. Gardner, Atlantic City, N. J.; James A. Norton, Ohio; Amos Cummings, N. Y. City; James L. Sherman, Utica, N. Y.; M. Brossius, Lancaster, Pa., and Senators Boise Penrose, Pa.; Kean, N. J.; Kenny, Conn.; Wellington, Md.; Vest, Mo.; Morgan, Ala., and J. H. Hollingsworth, Clerk. The honorary pall-bearers selected from the Bar Association of Reading were Hon. H. W. Bland, Chas. H. Schaeffer, Esq., Richmond L. Jones, Esq., and C. H. Ruhl, Esq.

There were many beautiful tributes to the memory of the deceased, notably from the newspapers of his own home, as well as from the press of the State generally; from the Bar Association of Berks county; from various po-

litical organizations of his own party; from a local Post of the Grand Army of the Republic; as there were letters of condolence from distinguished citizens of the State, including the Chief Magistrate of the Commonwealth; from Congressional associates of the late Congressman, and from private individuals, and from neighbors and friends generally.

As a matter of historical interest in Mr. Ermentrout's Congressional career, it may be mentioned that up to the time of his death he was the last one remaining of a party of six who were gathered in his committee room at Washington discussing civil service reform. They were John F. Andrews, of Massachusetts; ex-Governor Curtin, of Pennsylvania; Secretary Gresham, of Illinois; Arnott of New York; Mutchler, of Pennsylvania, and himself. At the death of Congressman Andrews, which took place in June, 1895, Mr. Ermentrout wrote in his diary the following quotation from Whittier on the death of Longfellow: "Who next shall fall and disappear? I await the answer with awe and solemnity and yet with unshaken trust in the mercy of the All-Merciful."

Alas! the dread summons came to our friend and fellow-member all too soon!



LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



0 013 787 669 3